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Thursday, 29 September 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Salam	(Lebanon)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Mashabane
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2011/590)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2011/590)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, Acting Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/590, containing the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: I thank Minister Rassoul for being with us today. His presence sends a strong signal at a time when, as the Lebanese presidency has reminded us, Afghanistan is going through a terrible time. His presence reminds us of the departure of Mr. Rabbani, and we need to hear from him about how Afghanistan will once again confront a difficult moment.

We meet today at a sad moment indeed for the people of Afghanistan. The recent killing of former President and head of the High Peace Council, Mr. Rabbani, who was a friend to many of us and highly respected by us all, was a shock to all of us. But Afghanistan and the Afghans have shown so many times over thousands of years the capacity to recover again and again from tragic and sad losses, and we know and feel that their resolve in the search for peace will not be deterred. That was said recently by President Karzai himself.

It remains unclear who was behind this attack. As Mr. Rabbani's son said at the funeral in Kabul, we must continue to work for peace — the same peace that Mr. Rabbani had started and to which he had committed himself and sacrificed his life in his role as Chairman of the High Peace Council. History shows that reconciliation efforts are particularly vulnerable to attack when they start to gain traction and precisely for that reason. In recent years, there has been increased interest shown by many relevant parties in the idea of a peace process. Under Mr. Rabbani's leadership, the High Peace Council in fact started to generate a form of dialogue that was definitely needed to address the trust deficit before talks could become more concrete.

The road to peace is never smooth. We know that. The death of Mr. Rabbani is not the end of the peace process. That has been said by many Afghans, in particular the highest authorities of the country. This is a moment for the Afghans to recalibrate — a moment that calls for national unity among the leaders and people of Afghanistan as they again endure another tragic loss.

I myself was recently invited to a showing of an Afghan film celebrating the achievements of four young Afghans who, with no previous experience and without the support of outsiders, were able to overcome the highest physical obstacle in Afghanistan to become the first team of Afghans to stand on the top of Mount Noshaq, the highest mountain in the country. That serves as a reminder to all of us that the Afghan Government and people, with the support of others like us, will eventually be able to work together to find a peaceful solution to their problems.

There is no alternative to a political solution. There is a window of opportunity, albeit very narrow and clearly fragile, for talks to begin, and we need to pursue it. Peace is not an event but a process that, if it is to be sustainable and deliver lasting results, must be broad-based and include Afghans from all walks of life, including civil society. The priority must continue to be a dialogue among and led by Afghans themselves,

with non-Afghans like us playing a supporting role, if and when required.

At the national level and as proof of its continued commitment to searching for peace, we support the Afghan Government and hope that it will proceed with the swift appointment of an authoritative voice not to replace Mr. Rabbani — who is not replaceable — but to persist in the efforts he led within the High Peace Council.

Peace efforts are also very much about redressing local grievances. Here, I should like to pay my respects to and single out Minister Stanekzai, who is a friend to whom we wish a swift recovery from his wounds. His efforts to advance the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme as a critical process at the local level have been crucial and need to continue as a dispute resolution mechanism, in addition to other, similar mechanisms. That is why we wish to praise and commend the timely convening of a recent conference on the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme in Kandahar, which offered an opportunity to further promote reintegration, particularly in the South where, in all frankness, there has been less progress than in the northern part of the country.

Furthermore, regarding the Programme, we should remain vigilant in ensuring a proper and rigorous vetting mechanism. Our memories of the tragic events in Kandahar, along with our experience in Mazar-e-Sharif and now with Mr. Rabbani, remind us of how important vetting can and should be.

On a positive note with respect to the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army, we have noticed increasing positive progress in the development of both institutions. They have been showing that they are capable of taking on more security responsibilities and of becoming more self-sustaining. That is why, in spite of all these incidents, the transition is going forward. Recent security incidents, while regrettable due to the loss of life, have also shown the increased ability of the Afghan national security system to manage such incidents in a controlled and proportionate manner. I shall give another personal example of that, if I may.

In August, among the many attacks that had taken place, there was an attack in Abdul Haq Square that lasted several hours. On that occasion, a Lieutenant Colonel who was the chief police officer in the area embraced the suicide attacker who was moving towards the people in the square; he exploded with him and died. In doing so, he saved many lives, including those of his own team. These are the types of incidents that make us foreigners in Kabul feel that it is not mere rhetoric to say that the Afghan National Police is growing in the respect it enjoys from the people and in the fulfilment of its functions.

The human cost in terms of the lives of average Afghans is still too high, as President Karzai is constantly reminding us. While security incidents, and certainly military incidents, may be fewer in number — and there is no question about that, as compared with the past — the overall level of civilian casualties, is still, unfortunately, too high; even one civilian casualty is one too many. We are increasingly concerned about the rising number of casualties and the use of certain tactics, particularly by the Taliban and by the insurgents, because — and we have been seeing this — they are indiscriminately targeting the civilian population.

Errors still occur, but there is an improvement in the right direction; however, the need for a surge in the protection of civilians needs to be our constant focus. The Afghan State, which has done a great deal, must continue to distinguish itself by putting respect for universal human rights at the centre of its own policies and practices, including in the treatment of prisoners and detainees, an area in which we have already seen substantial and encouraging movement in the right direction. And when such progress takes place, we should acknowledge it, as in the case of the very encouraging improved regulation on women's shelters, which could potentially go a long way towards protecting Afghan women and girls, who often have been at risk of violence and abuse.

Today we are having an important meeting at a very sad and important moment in Afghan history. This is one of the meetings being held in preparation for two crucial meetings that will be convened later this year, one in Istanbul and the other in Bonn. We hope that they will be an opportunity for a collective determination to support and reassure the Afghan Government and people that we will be with them in the long run. It is our responsibility to ensure that the upcoming conferences, particularly the two that I mentioned, are not ceremonial — we know that they are not going to be ceremonial — but complementary, substantive and forward-looking.

The Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, to be held on 2 November, will be an important rendezvous that we hope will represent an opportunity for representatives of the region to gather in Istanbul with the intent of setting in motion measures to establish what is being defined as a benign regional order, one in which Afghanistan and its neighbours will exchange mutual assurances aimed at creating a stable and prosperous heart of Asia.

Afghanistan feels, and we share those feelings, that it should not be the subject of but the catalyst for this conference, at which the region can discuss concrete, not theoretical, ways to develop confidence-building measures aimed at addressing common challenges. A great deal of constructive work has been done already, particularly on the economic side. I think that is what the Istanbul conference aspires to address, in keeping with the wishes of the Afghan people. We want to thank the Turkish authorities for their hospitality and their vision in offering this opportunity to address political and security issues as well as economic ones.

We believe that the upcoming preparatory meeting in Oslo, to be held in two days' time, will ensure that there is a clear idea among regional players and others about the possibility of brainstorming on this issue, so that we can come up with a stronger declaration, or something along those lines, in Istanbul, and possibly some type of follow-up structural approach in order to ensure that whatever is discussed in Istanbul does not remain just a statement.

UNAMA encourages and supports those efforts, of which it is a part, while, of course, recognizing the strong leadership of the two co-chairs, particularly Afghanistan and Turkey. We support all initiatives, including the New Silk Road, that are in the interest of Afghanistan, its neighbours and the broader region, in areas where we should be investing our attention.

Only trust among Afghanistan and its neighbours and trust among individuals can create an atmosphere in which private investment becomes more active and thrives, as we hope it will.

We are looking forward to the Bonn conference, to be held on 5 December. It has the potential to have a historic impact, although, as always, we should be cautious in our expectations; but our hopes are very high. This will be a crucial opportunity for assessing the transition, which is moving ahead. By that time we will also have had other meetings in other forums where the Afghan authorities and the International Security Assistance Force will make clear their views on how to substantially, we hope, increase the transition momentum; promote support beyond 2014, because they need to feel that they will not be abandoned once again; and facilitate whatever progress has been made, hopefully in the direction of reconciliation.

There were clouds on the horizon last time I had the honour and the privilege of meeting with Council members here. The first cloud was the electoral follow-up and the parliamentary crisis, and the other was related to the Kabul Bank. I do not wish to be perceived as overly optimistic, but I think that I am honest enough to tell the Council that both clouds are dissipating.

The first cloud is dissipating thanks to a very courageous and wise decision by President Karzai. Indeed, the Independent Electoral Commission was recognized as the final authority on electoral issues, as in any other part of the world where democracy is moving in the right direction. We have therefore come to the conclusion of a difficult but probably useful trip related to the electoral process.

I believe that we will be on a much smoother path for the next elections, whenever they take place, because recognizing that the Independent Electoral Commission is the final authority is a very good starting point for future elections and for the democratic process of the separation of powers in Afghanistan, like anywhere else. So there is good movement in the right direction. Nothing is perfect — of course, nothing is perfect anywhere, not only in Afghanistan — but there is movement in the right direction, and we feel that the cloud is moving away.

On the issue of the Kabul Bank, we see light, strong light coming from behind the cloud, to the point where sometimes it does not even look like a cloud, frankly. There is a possibility of seeing an agreement in principle on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, and we believe that can be reached through the ongoing negotiations. An IMF technical mission will arrive in Kabul tomorrow, 30 September, and stay there for 10 days to finalize discussions. The IMF Board meting is scheduled for mid-November. That also means that another important element, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which is

basically a special window of financial support for the short-term funding of key national priority programmes, is looking much more positive. Additional funds are required, but already many countries have indicated that they will continue to fund it while waiting for the cloud to totally disappear.

In that context, I think that, along with my friend the Minister of Finance, we are likely to be able to co-chair and convene a joint coordination and monitoring board, which is a kind of common board between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community on joint economic activities, which has been suspended during this period. We hope to do this in November, before the Bonn conference.

With respect to the review, which, as members are aware, we take very seriously — and the Afghan authorities, rightly, also take very seriously — we will continue to work to ensure that the terms of reference are satisfactory to everyone, in particular to the Afghan authorities, and work in close cooperation with them and, of course, with full respect for the Security Council mandate.

On the humanitarian front, although we recognize that there are many other areas in the world where humanitarian priorities require the Council's attention, we believe that the drought is an issue of concern. The humanitarian community, together with the Afghan authorities, will need to keep a close eye on the situation since, in addition to insecurity, the drought may produce food shortages. That is why we look forward to seeing the outcome of the 2011 consolidated appeals emergency revision, which focuses particularly on the issue of drought.

With regard to combating narcotics, I will never cease to remind the Council that current efforts are not sufficient and that the issue remains serious both for the Afghans as well as, quite frankly, neighbouring countries and their people.

Finally, the next three months are likely to be very challenging. From a security point of view, I am afraid, the writing on the wall is clear. We will have to endure, resist and go forward even if a pattern of security challenges is likely to emerge. We are also going to have other kinds of opportunities, such as transition, second tranche, Istanbul and Bonn. When I will have the honour to return here in December to deliver my last briefing in my current capacity, I hope I will be able to bring good news. The Afghans deserve nothing else.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Mr. Rassoul (Afghanistan): I wish to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the Government of Lebanon on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of September. I also thank my good friend Special Representative Staffan De Mistura for his briefing and presentation of the Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan (S/2011/590).

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the Council once again. Today's meeting takes place against the backdrop of yet another recent tragedy in Afghanistan. A little over a week ago, the enemies of peace in Afghanistan martyred the Chairman of the High Peace Council, former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani. Mr. Rabbani will be remembered for his distinguished service in the cause of peace in Afghanistan. But I want to assure the Council that, despite this national loss, our reconciliation process will continue. On behalf of the Afghan people and Government, I convey gratitude and appreciation for the outpouring of condolences and support received from around the world.

This year is of particular importance to Afghanistan. First, it marks 10 years since the end of the rule of the Taliban, culminating in the opening of a new chapter in our modern history defined by a concerted effort to achieve what has eluded us Afghans for too long: peace, stability and prosperity. Over the past decade, we have come a long way in our joint efforts and have much to show for our progress in building our State institutions, in ensuring our people with essential services, in enabling democracy to take root and in upholding the fundamental rights of a'l our citizens.

Secondly, this year we also embarked on transition, an ambitious process by which we Afghans will take full responsibility for the security of our country by the end of 2014. As President Karzai emphasized in his statement to the General Assembly last week,

> "With the completion of the transition process, we Afghans and our international partners will

achieve the most strategic goal of our 10-year long partnership: the emergence of a sovereign Afghanistan that is self-reliant and the peaceful home of all Afghans; an Afghanistan that is at peace, and lives in peace with the rest of the world" (*A/66/PV.18*).

In addition to solid Afghan national resolve, the success of the transition process will depend on the continued support of the international community, most importantly in building the capacity of our national security institutions.

Alongside the transition of security responsibilities, we are focused on doing what is necessary to implement the economic pillar of the transition process. This will be a more difficult task, requiring more time and the sustained and long-term engagement of our international partners during and after the transition process.

In this regard, we are determined to maximize the potential offered by our natural resources for strengthening our economy. Furthermore, we have prioritized attracting foreign investments and building our infrastructure. Such efforts will enable us to play a key role in broadening, deepening and strengthening regional economic integration by reviving our historic place as the land-bridge between Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. In that connection, we are pleased that the new Silk Road initiative has gained momentum. We welcome the constructive discussion of last week's ministerial meeting here in New York, which we co-chaired with Germany and the United States.

Despite our efforts to stabilize our country, Afghans are still suffering an endless campaign of terror carried out by Afghanistan's enemies. Over the past months, terrorists have launched sophisticated attacks, including the raid on the Inter-Continental Hotel, the attacks on the NATO compound and the United States embassy in Kabul, and a chain of targeted assassinations of a number of Afghanistan's prominent and high-profile national figures.

The continued spate of attacks, which originate from terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens beyond our borders, has generated an unprecedented level of anger and frustration among a wide spectrum of Afghan society. Let me stress once again our repeated call for a definitive end to these sanctuaries, which are not only harming Afghans, but also destabilizing the region as a whole.

To help end the conflict and meet the demands and aspirations of the Afghan people for a durable, dignified and inclusive peace, we will work to bring back to social, economic and political life all members of the armed opposition willing to renounce violence, sever ties with terrorist groups, and accept our Constitution, including respect for human rights and women's rights in particular.

Despite the assassination of Mr. Rabbani, which was intended to disrupt the peace process, the High Peace Council will pursue its mandate for peace and reconciliation. If reconciliation is to succeed, we must have the support of regional and international partners. In this connection, I emphasize the importance of a result-oriented role for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. At the same time, we wish to remind the Council that we are committed at all costs to defeating those bent on the destruction and destabilization of our country.

We have an important political calendar ahead of us. We look forward to the Istanbul and Bonn Conferences, scheduled for November and December. In Istanbul, together with the countries that make up the heart of Asia and other international partners, we will focus on defining a new vision for regional peace and development. We will do so by soliciting concrete commitments to enhancing confidence-building, security and political cooperation centred around Afghanistan. A peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan is not only an Afghan need; such an Afghanistan is an absolute precondition for peace, security and prosperity in the region.

In Bonn, we will brief the international community on our achievements over the past decade, with a specific focus on transition, reconciliation and regional cooperation. We will also share our vision for the 10 years after transition on consolidating our stability, democracy and economic development. Above all, in Bonn we will call upon the international community for continued assistance beyond 2014.

Indeed, Afghanistan is already working with our friends and allies on mapping out our enduring partnerships, including with the United States, the European Union and NATO. These partnerships will help guarantee our security, stability and future economic development.

The United Nations has played a very important role in our achievements thus far, for which we remain grateful. On the way forward, this role must be adjusted to reinforce Afghan sovereignty. We welcome all efforts to ensure a more integrated, effective and one United Nations approach, and look forward to the joint comprehensive review of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. In that connection, let me thank the Secretary-General once again for authorizing the joint review.

In conclusion, I thank all Afghanistan's partners in the international community for standing beside us in solidarity as we strive to strengthen the foundations of peace, democracy and development we have laid down in Afghanistan. Over the past decade, we have come a long way in our joint efforts, which is something we can all be proud of. But we are still not completely out of the woods. We in Afghanistan are convinced that, together with the support of the international community, we will succeed in realizing our common vision of a peaceful, stable and democratic Afghanistan, a country that is self-reliant and a factor for regional and global peace and cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan for his statement.

I now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): I wish to thank Foreign Minister Rassoul for his most valuable statement and, of course, for his presence here. Minister, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Council today.

I am also grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General de Mistura for his briefing. I commend him, his entire staff in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the wider United Nations family for their admirable work, which was carried out under very difficult circumstances. The support of the United Nations will remain absolutely pivotal.

Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later in today's debate by the European Union.

Germany condemns in the strongest possible terms the murder of the Chair of the High Peace Council, Professor Rabbani. Allow me to reiterate the heartfelt condolences of the Government and the people of Germany to the Afghan authorities and all Afghans. We wish Minister Stanekzai, Chief Executive of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, and all others who were injured a very speedy recovery.

Germany welcomes the strong messages sent out by President Karzai and his Government, at this decisive moment in their unwavering determination to stay the course in the peace and reconciliation process. In that context, I wish to underline the commitment of support reiterated by the Security Council in its statement of 21 September (SC/10391).

The International Conference on Afghanistan to be held in Bonn on 5 December will be a crucial milestone for Afghanistan, as mentioned by Special Representative of the Secretary-General de Mistura and Foreign Minister Rassoul. As I outlined to the Council in July (see S/PV.6574), a core aim of the Conference is to further define the future engagement of the international community, both during and after the security transition, which will have been completed by the end of 2014. In Germany's view, security transition marks a new beginning in, not the end of, international support to Afghanistan.

Several factors need to be kept in mind. A clear and unequivocal message of long-term support to our Afghan friends is our bottom line for Bonn in terms of ensuring security, building a sustainable administration and, last but not least, fostering economic development.

On that note, we are encouraged by the continued progress in security transition. While we remain concerned about the volatile overall security environment, we note with appreciation that more and more security operations in more and more parts of Afghanistan are being handled by Afghan security forces.

Regional cooperation is of particular relevance for the success of the international Afghanistan strategy. Germany strongly supports recent initiatives to implement previous declarations on good-neighbourly relations. We particularly look forward to the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, to be held on 2 November. Its results will be of paramount importance for the future of regional cooperation in the heart of Asia. Germany also welcomes the bilateral steps that have been taken, particularly with Pakistan,

such as the recent formation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace.

As a complement to the ongoing political process, I would like to emphasize the potential of increased economic cooperation for positive change in the region. Only one week ago, in the presence of more than 15 foreign ministers, 30 delegations from the region and beyond met here in New York to formulate their common vision for a New Silk Road to increase regional economic cooperation with Afghanistan.

That vision requires sincere regional efforts to become a reality, but it will also need significant international support over time. Looking towards Bonn, the Co-chairs — Afghanistan, the United States and Germany — invite partners to contribute to charting out options for how best to turn this vision into a reality, step by step by step.

As I mentioned, the support of the international community will be required long after the transition will have ended. From that perspective, our yardstick must remain the principle of reinforcing Afghan sovereignty.

In regard to the UNAMA review process mentioned by Minister Rassoul, and in the light of the Council's March 2012 UNAMA mandate resolution, Germany looks forward to the outcome of the review. As I said earlier, the support of the United Nations will remain absolutely pivotal. In that context, we note with appreciation the continued progress of the United Nations towards delivering as one.

Let me end by giving three recent examples that underscore how cooperation between Afghanistan and its international partners to implement the Kabul process leads to continued progress on the ground, every day, despite the volatile conditions in the country.

First, despite serious setbacks, the Kabul process itself seems to be getting back on track. Germany welcomes signs that there is now greater clarity concerning the next steps that need to be taken before an International Monetary Fund programme can be approved.

Secondly, while tensions continue between and inside the different branches of Government after the first legislative elections held under Afghan leadership, there is now a solution backing the authority of the Independent Electoral Commission that offers a prospect for improved procedures, in line with the commitments of the Government of Afghanistan to long-term electoral reform.

Thirdly, the sincere and valuable support of the Government of Afghanistan for the study undertaken by UNAMA on the treatment of detainees in several facilities managed by the Afghan security forces is highly commendable. This clearly demonstrates the common interest in the improvement of the human rights. My Government is strongly convinced that, once the report has been finalized, the Afghan Government will find the right answers — and the international community the right way to support them.

As we continue our support at the Bonn conference and beyond, Germany will continue to stand side by side with our Afghan friends.

Mr. Messone (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My country also welcomes the presence in the Council today of Minister Zalmai Rassoul and we thank him for his important statement.

We would like to also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan on the basis of the report (S/2011/590) before us.

We share the strong condemnations expressed by the international community following the assassination of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani. Gabon commends his efforts as Chair of the High Peace Council and the Government. Once again, I hope that the Afghan people will continue his efforts in the passionate quest for peace.

My delegation welcomes the resolve of the Afghan authorities in seeking to rebuild confidence following this great loss. The political process of transition must run its course so that all programmes can be implemented before the 2014 deadline.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/590) that is under consideration underscores the significant developments that have held our attention in terms of dialogue and reconciliation, the political process, security, the humanitarian and human rights situation, governance and the rule of law and regional cooperation.

At the last debate in the Council, we naturally emphasized the importance of dialogue and

reconciliation in this process (see S/PV.6574). That dialogue must continue to build on confidence-building measures, and should be inclusive and participatory, particularly at this crucial time, when the negotiating terms with all the parties involved must be reviewed. To that end, my delegation welcomes the Afghan Government's readiness, as expressed in the last general debate, to finally include the Taliban in the transition process, so that they may play a constructive role in that process. We therefore call on them to respond to the hand extended to them. We welcome the measures adopted by the authorities in the political arena since the administration's inauguration in January. We of course encourage the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in their support for those efforts.

The humanitarian situation continues to be a cause for concern, given the security issues and other aggravating factors, such as the drought, which undermine the significant improvements made in this area. We call on the United Nations and the international community as a whole to continue to pay particular attention to this situation.

In order to build on the gains established through dialogue and reconciliation, it is important that we continue to work towards the goals of strengthening governance and the rule of law in the context of the Kabul Process. Here we welcome the information we have received from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Zalmai Rassoul. We also commend the efforts that have been made in terms of regional cooperation, as well as the initiatives taken in that area, particularly the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace, and, of course, the two conferences to be held at the end of the year in Istanbul and Bonn.

That said, the terrorist threat persists, and the protection of everyone involved — civilians, the political authorities and personnel from international forces, such as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) or the United Nations itself — remains a priority. The situation on the ground still requires a military and police presence in the form of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as well as the Afghan National Security Forces. ISAF's mandate is coming to an end and must be renewed. The tasks it will be assigned for the period to come will of course take into account the Afghan security forces' new strategies for securing the territory, strategies whose preparation we encourage so that effective joint counter-terrorism operations can be conducted with ISAF through upstream military action and involve the judicial system in which the perpetrators of these crimes can be brought to justice.

I would like to conclude by once again expressing our support and appreciation of UNAMA and NATO for their important role in supporting a Government dealing with so many challenges. And naturally we endorse the Secretary-General's words of satisfaction and encouragement to his Special Representative, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and to all the personnel at UNAMA and the United Nations team for their work on the ground. Finally, I also commend the Governments of Turkey and Germany for convening the conferences to be held in Istanbul and Bonn at the end of this year.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I thank Mr. Rassoul, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, for being here today and honouring us with his presence. We are grateful for his remarks. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing and his continuing extraordinary service. I hope he will also convey to the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) the enduring gratitude of the United States for the important work they do every day throughout Afghanistan, under considerable hardship, for the benefit of the Afghan people. We are also grateful for the important contributions of Deputy Special Representative Martin Kobler, who is on his way to Iraq to take up the post of Special Representative there.

This morning my remarks will focus on security, upcoming events that frame the 2014 transition, and the New Silk Road initiative. As we know, the United States Embassy compound in Kabul was attacked earlier this month. The Afghan National Security Forces have responsibility for Kabul, and they responded ably. They ended the assault on the Embassy; there was minimal damage to Embassy property and the compound, and no United States personnel were killed. However, the insurgent attack killed five Afghan National Police and 11 other Afghans, including children.

While the security situation in Afghanistan continues to present challenges, notably including the insurgents' continued targeting of fellow Afghans, our goal remains to gradually shift to a supporting role as

the Afghan National Security Forces continue to develop their capabilities. The deployment of additional United States military service members, together with additional troops committed by our allies and partners, has helped stabilize more of the country and shifted the momentum away from the insurgency.

Together we have made significant progress. The tragic assassination of Afghanistan's former President and Chairman of the Afghan High Peace Council, Mr. Rabbani, has only strengthened our collective resolve. We will continue to work in support of the Afghan Government and people to end the insurgency, pursue justice against those who fund, direct and carry out the violence, and realize a peaceful future for all Afghans. President Obama has been clear that the strong United States relationship with Afghanistan will extend well beyond 2014. We continue to make progress on our strategic partnership document, which outlines our long-term cooperation during the transition period and beyond. As President Obama and President Karzai reaffirmed in their meeting last week, we will have a strategic partnership between our nations that provides a long-term framework for bilateral cooperation on security, economic and social development, and institution-building.

As Afghanistan moves towards the 2014 transition, we know that the Government alone cannot grow Afghanistan's economy, so we must all continue to work to create an environment that attracts private-sector investment. Last week, Foreign Minister Rassoul, the German Foreign Minister, Mr. Guido Westerwelle, and Secretary of State Clinton met with 27 of Afghanistan's neighbours and partners to advance their shared vision of a New Silk Road. The New Silk Road is an Afghan-led venture, a rallying point for securing Afghan, regional and international commitments to support Afghanistan's transition and develop a sustainable Afghan economy that will benefit the whole region. The creation of a New Silk Road will help Afghanistan and its neighbours maximize the value of their natural resources, build human capacity, create jobs, generate revenue to pay for needed services and capitalize on the region's economic potential. The New Silk Road will also promote women entrepreneurs, since we know that sustained and successful development depends on women becoming equal partners. The international community has an important role to play in supporting Afghanistan and the region's efforts to make this vision a reality. The New Silk Road initiative will reinforce the search for diplomatic solutions to ending the war in Afghanistan.

The year 2011 remains a pivotal one. The international Conference on Afghanistan to be held in Bonn at the end of the year will be a key opportunity for the Government of Afghanistan and its neighbours, as well as the international community, to strengthen economic cooperation in the region. This will be complemented by regional efforts to strengthen mutual confidence and neighbourly relations at the conference on security and cooperation in Istanbul in November. We also welcome the start of the comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandated activities and United Nations support in Afghanistan.

We reaffirm our gratitude for the crucial and continued commitment of the United Nations. UNAMA is working in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan for the benefit of all Afghans in their quest for peace, security and stability. We will continue to support the Afghan Government and people, regional partners and the international community as we work to establish stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and throughout the region.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. De Mistura for his analysis of the situation in Afghanistan and welcome the statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mr. Zalmai Rassoul. Allow me through him, to express our deep condolences to the Government and the people of Afghanistan for the killing on 20 September of the Chairman of the High Peace Council and former President Burhanuddin Rabbani. His death reaffirms the need to further enhance international efforts to counter terrorism, which remains the primary impediment to restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

I should like to say a few words on the security situation in the country. As we see it, the situation in many provinces continues to worsen. Extremists are expanding their activities. The number of killings and abductions of Afghan Government workers and simple citizens continues to grow, as eloquently expressed in the data provided in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/590). The elimination of Osama Bin Laden has not led to the anticipated breakthrough, as we see have in particular in the latest spate of terrible terrorist attacks and killings of senior Afghan officials, in the

ongoing tensions in Pakistan, and in the increase in losses of coalition and Afghan troops.

The situation is alarming in areas where responsibilities for security have been handed over to Afghans themselves, despite the fact that troops of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), as we understand it, are still there and supporting them and their combat readiness.

There is particular concern about spillover of terrorist activities from Afghanistan into the Central Asian States as a consequence of the inefficacy of NATO's anti-terrorist activities in Afghanistan, which are not eliminating the fighters but pushing them primarily from the southern to the northern regions and neighbouring States.

We share the concerns of the Secretary-General with respect to the death of peaceful citizens as a result of indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force by those involved in hostilities. Responsibility for strict compliance with the standards of international humanitarian law is borne by all parties, including ISAF.

Obviously, Afghan problems cannot be resolved by military means alone. In this regard, we support the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to establish a dialogue with the armed opposition. That process must be steered by the Afghans, and the insurgents will need to meet three well-known conditions: recognition of the Constitution, breaking with Al-Qaida and other terrorist and extremist organizations, and disarmament. Meeting these criteria is a necessary condition for de-listing from the Taliban sanctions list, but no one can deny the need for the effective maintenance of the Council's sanctions as a crucial instrument in counter-terrorism.

Terrorism is closely intertwined with drug crime. Drugs are destroying Afghanistan and posing a serious threat to countries of the region and to international peace and stability. We have said repeatedly that the drug threat needs to be comprehensively countered with respect to all of its components, from destroying drug crops and reducing consumption to denying druglords access to precursors and putting them on sanctions lists.

In this context, we attach particular importance to the Paris Pact's Third Ministerial Conference on Drug Trafficking Routes to be held in Vienna in 8 December. We hope that the countries represented here will take part in that conference at the level of heads of foreign policy institutions.

We welcome the beginning of transfer of security responsibility to the Afghans. It is too early to draw any conclusions, but the very fact that this responsibility is being transferred is critical. We need to focus on making the process irreversible.

The declared reduction of the number of United States troops and the gradual transfer to Afghan security forces of full responsibility for ensuring security must go hand in hand with appropriate strengthening of the capabilities of these national structures. As we see it, candidates for the army and the police must be closely vetted for loyalty; the quality of training for security forces must be enhanced and they must be provided with modern weapons.

The international military presence must be temporary. A clear timetable must be defined for drawdown and reports sent to the Security Council on the implementation of the mandate, which authorized the deployment of ISAF. The departure of NATO contingents and their allies should not be accompanied by the maintenance of any foreign military presence under any other umbrella, which would further contribute to tensions in the military and political situation in Afghanistan and the region in general.

After the withdrawal of foreign troops, it would behoove Afghanistan, as a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, to consider restoring the status as a neutral State which it had for many decades. That idea has already been supported in the statements of a number of key players in the Afghan arena, and in the Astana Declaration issued on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on 15 June. Clearly, the initiative is up to the Afghan people themselves. It is not a matter for the near future, but for a time when the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan will have been successfully completed. But if Kabul already begins to identify the restoration of neutrality as a task for the long term, it could ease dialogue on reconciliation with the armed opposition.

Many have noted and we support the idea that there is a need to promptly relaunch the Afghan economy. That cannot be done without neighbouring States, as clearly attested to by the recent spate of regional initiatives that have been referred to here and

which will be discussed at the forthcoming Conferences in Istanbul and Bonn.

An architecture of multilateral engagement in place in Central and South Asia, including the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the group of four comprised of the Russian Federation, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan. It would make sense to focus partners' efforts on developing and enhancing these well-proven structures of regional cooperation. Our view is that the players external to the region, in their actions in this area, should in fact respect the decisions taken by the countries of the region in the framework of these organizations.

In the context of regional economic development, we give priority to the CASA-1000 project, which established a new system of providing electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to building the TAPI gas pipeline through Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. We reaffirm our readiness to engage Russian companies in its implementation. At the recent summit of the four at Dushanbe in early September, President Medvedev of the Russian Federation stated our readiness to invest $500 million in the CASA-1000 project.

In short, this entire range of problems demonstrates the magnitude of the challenges facing the international community, specifically the United Nations Mission, in assisting and normalizing the situation in Afghanistan. We hope that the close cooperation of the United Nations with the Government of Afghanistan will continue to move forward and that the assiduous efforts of the international community and the Government of Afghanistan will be successful.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to welcome the presence of Foreign Minister Rassoul in the Security Council this morning and to thank him for his important statement. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/590) and Special Representative De Mistura for his briefing. We pay tribute to his leadership and the work of his team in Afghanistan.

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere condolences to the family of former President Rabbani. The United Kingdom condemns those responsible for his appalling and cowardly murder. They took advantage of Mr. Rabbani's hospitality and good faith. He was a negotiator and a peacemaker, and his efforts should have been respected. Those responsible are sending a signal that they do not want to play a role in Afghanistan's future. In the light of this tragic event, we will want to consider further listings under the sanctions regime of resolution 1988 (2011), and we will continue to review very closely any request for de-listing.

President Karzai and other Afghan political leaders have pledged to continue the peace process. This is a sign of their commitment to the Afghan people. They have made clear that this attack will not derail their efforts. Instead, they are ready to engage with those elements of the insurgency that are genuinely willing to work towards a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan. I commend their stance and emphasize the United Kingdom's readiness to support that work.

Despite this shocking event, progress is being made in Afghanistan. The start of the transition process in July saw seven areas begin the process of handing over lead security to the Afghans. The latest reports of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) confirm positive progress in these areas, with the capability and capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces continuing to improve. The Special Representative reinforced that message this morning.

The recent attacks on the British Council, the United States embassy and ISAF headquarters were shocking, but demonstrated the increasing ability of the Afghan National Security Forces to respond to such events. We are on course for the next set of provinces to begin transition towards the end of this year, and it is encouraging that ISAF is keen to start the transition process in the more challenging areas of Afghanistan.

The protection of the Afghan civilian population remains at the core of our military strategy. ISAF continues to work to reduce the level of civilian casualties and has strict operating procedures both to minimize the risk of casualties occurring and to investigate thoroughly any incidents that do happen. This is in sharp contrast to the insurgency, which deliberately targets civilians and uses violent tactics to intimidate the population. Around 80 per cent of civilian casualties are caused by insurgents, and we continue to strongly condemn all such attacks.

Transition will inevitably impact upon Afghanistan's economy as income sources decline and

the costs of the Afghan National Security Forces come under national control. Although revenue is growing, it will not balance expenditure for several years. It is therefore vital that the international community be able to agree on a way to ensure continued funding for Afghanistan's security and development needs beyond 2014. Good progress has been made on a new International Monetary Fund programme for Afghanistan, and essential reforms to improve the banking sector are now being implemented. A final agreement is possible before the Bonn Conference in December and will be an important milestone for the long-term health of the Afghan economy.

As Minister Rassoul and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General highlighted, we have two major international events that will consolidate progress already made and set the context for next year. The Istanbul Conference on 2 November will be a key opportunity to enhance and expand regional cooperation. We hope that the region will use the opportunity to agree on a coherent approach, building on language of the London and Kabul conference communiqués on good-neighbourly relations. We look forward to the Conference, and thank the Turkish hosts and the Government of Afghanistan for their tireless work in its preparation.

Following Istanbul, the December Bonn Conference will send a clear signal of the Afghan Government's growing ownership and leadership on its path to self-sufficiency, and of the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan beyond the transition process.

On long-term engagement, we believe that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will have a vital role to play both during and beyond transition, and we therefore look forward to the forthcoming review of UNAMA's mandated activities and United Nations support in Afghanistan. We urge the review to focus on the post-2014 landscape and on how UNAMA and the United Nations can support the Afghan Government in bringing about the emergence of a strong, durable and self-sustaining Afghan State.

The death of Mr. Rabbani will not deflect us from our goals. Political aims cannot be achieved by violence and extremism. The course of reconciliation and greater political inclusion for all Afghan groups will continue. The Bonn Conference will help drive efforts forward. I want to take this occasion to make clear our message to the Taliban that there is no military solution. Our commitment to Afghanistan's security and stability is enduring, and we will continue to support the Afghan National Security Forces and a strong Afghan State long after 2015. If the Taliban believe that peace can be achieved through dialogue, then now is the time to signal that belief, because the window of opportunity will not remain open forever.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): My delegation welcomes Foreign Minister Rassoul to this meeting and thanks him especially for his very important statement. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for his very comprehensive briefing.

Our intervention this morning will focus on three principal areas: security, political post-electoral development, and economic and regional cooperation.

Nigeria notes with deep concern the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, which to a large extent continues to distract the Government's commitment and initiatives in the full operationalization of the transition and the Kabul process. The high toll in civilian casualties has reached an alarming proportion, and this serious challenge must be met with decisive action through the collaborative efforts of the international community.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the senseless and meaningless terrorist attack last week in Kabul that resulted in deaths and injuries. In the same vein, the targeted assassination of former Afghan President and Chairman of the High Peace Council Rabbani, who had dedicated his life to campaigning assiduously for a sustained peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan, was indeed a huge blow to the peace process. This great loss and tragic incident must not dampen our hopes for a new Afghanistan.

Nigeria reiterates its commitment to supporting the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to advance the peace and reconciliation process, and indeed supports the efforts of the international community in combating terrorism. We should ensure that those responsible for committing acts of terrorism are never allowed to truncate the cause of peace, unity and freedom in a new Afghanistan.

It is in this regard that we welcome the formalization of the agreement to increase the size of

the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which will enable it to effectively respond to the growing security threat in the country. In addition, the formal transition of security responsibility to the ANSF in some critical areas is a welcome development. The assumption of increasing control by the ANSF over Afghan security would strengthen the country's independence and development towards long-term stability. We hope that this approach will reinforce the capacity of the Afghan forces to maintain security. Suffice it to say that the transition of the first set of districts and provinces to full Afghan security control earlier in the year continues to face significant obstacles, especially in the area of border protection.

It is gratifying to note that Afghanistan continues to record positive progress in its reconciliation and integration efforts, despite the cynical trend of events in the country. Nigeria reiterates its support for this process to be Afghan-driven in order to forge the national unity envisaged within the framework of the peace process. That process must be further consolidated by Afghanistan's democratic institutions by way of resolving the legislative impasse created by the announcement of some changes in the membership of the National Assembly. While we support the need for Afghans themselves to reach a negotiated political solution to their problems, the reference point must remain the application of the rule of law in accordance with the Constitution. Other democratic and constitutionally mandated institutions, including the electoral bodies, must adhere to this ground rule. In that regard, the pivotal role of women in the peace process must not be undermined.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continues to play an active role in promoting constructive dialogue among all stakeholders, as well as to assist the Government in its framework for sustainable peace. We encourage all the parties to renew their commitment to the consolidation of the democratic peace process for the attainment of lasting peace and security.

On economic development, we note the Secretary-General's observation that the sustainability of the achievements recorded in Afghanistan will depend on the success in strengthening institutions, in particular at the sub-national level, the creation of jobs and economic opportunities, and on access to and delivery of basic justice. Moreover, the Government will need long-term international support and private sector investment to boost revenue generation and all its ramifications. We therefore continue to support the channelling of funds and other forms of assistance through the Afghan budget system for greater coherence and efficiency.

We welcome the increasing cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours. Their joint efforts to combat organized crime, including drug and human trafficking and arms smuggling, will not only facilitate the implementation of the Government's national priority programme, but also strengthen regional security. We believe that the Istanbul Conference of 2 November, which has been referred to in various statements, will provide yet another important platform to focus on prioritizing areas for regional cooperation.

We extend our appreciation and support to Special Representative of the Secretary-General De Mistura for his exceptional leadership, and to the staff of UNAMA and all United Nations personnel for their renewed commitment towards the sustainability of a democratic Afghanistan.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): We welcome the presence at today's meeting of His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. We listened with great interest to his remarks today.

I thank the Secretary-General for his valuable report (S/2011/590), and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura, for his informative briefing.

We are deeply concerned about the security situation in Afghanistan, especially regarding the continually increasing loss of civilian lives due to overall intensified fighting. We reiterate our condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of attacks against schools and mosques, and we repeat that such heinous attacks, which have taken the lives of children and innocent civilians, are simply not acceptable.

Furthermore, we condemn the targeted assassination of high-ranking Government officials and prominent political and religious leaders. We also strongly condemn the recent tragic killing of the Chair of the High Peace Council, Mr. Rabbani, and a number of his colleagues. We express our condolences to the Afghan Government and all Afghan people.

Despite all these difficulties, we sincerely hope that Afghanistan is now on the right path towards sustainable Afghan-led reconstruction of governance and of its economy, accompanied by the transition of responsibility over security in the country.

We welcome the formal start, on 17 July, of the transfer of security responsibilities to Afghan authorities. The increase of Afghan National Police forces and Afghan National Army will certainly and considerably facilitate this essential process, which should, in the end, bring greater security and stability, and, consequently, opportunities for the country's development.

In that regard, we noted positively the recent review conference organized by the Afghan Government and welcome its conclusion that it is necessary to include governance and development strategies in transition areas. It is therefore important that negotiation between the Afghan Government and the International Monetary Fund soon result in an agreement, which will protect the interests of the Afghan people and facilitate the much-needed reconstruction of the country. Furthermore, in the context of post-conflict reconstruction, we strongly support the mine clearance and demining programmes, and welcome the recent results obtained in the field.

We have always strongly supported the process of reconciliation in Afghanistan and, in that context, the role of the High Peace Council. We believe that there is no alternative to the national reconciliation process. We commend UNAMA for the continuous assistance it provides to the High Peace Council through its Salaam Support Group.

We welcome the increase of reintegrated persons who have joined the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme, and express our hope that this trend will continue in the future, with even greater success.

Dialogue and reconciliation must be the priority for all parties in Afghanistan for the sake of Afghan children and their hopes for a better future, generations of whom have already borne the enormous burden of war. We are also very concerned about the findings of the research conducted by UNAMA regarding child recruitment by anti-Government elements for military and suicide attacks. We call upon all parties to respect the rights of the child and expect the action plan to tackle perpetrators to be implemented by the authorities as a matter of the highest priority.

We also encourage UNAMA to continue to observe detention facilities across Afghanistan and to monitor and investigate arbitrary detention, ill treatment and fair trial guarantees.

We reiterate our strong support for cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, and we encourage all countries to continue strengthening it in the spirit of friendly relations.

The Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace certainly represents a good example of how to improve the reconciliation process in Afghanistan, bearing in mind the economic, political and trade issues that are being improved with neighbours.

We look forward to the conferences on Afghanistan, to be held in November and December in Istanbul and Bonn, respectively. We thank the Turkish and German Governments for their efforts and for the strong support they have given to Afghanistan's peace and prosperity.

With regard to UNAMA's security issues, we welcome the continuation of the process to upgrade the physical security of its field offices.

In conclusion, we would like to thank all the UNAMA and other United Nations staff for their dedicated work and for delivering on their mandates in a very difficult environment.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, and to thank him for his statement. I should also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his precise analysis and description of the situation in Afghanistan and the prospects for the transition process. More than a mere bureaucratic report, Mr. de Mistura's briefing was the testimony of someone who lives and works side by side with the people and Government of Afghanistan in restoring peace. UNAMA's substantial contribution to the stabilization and democratization processes and its efforts to work in coordination with the Government to lay the foundation for sustainable

peace and development in Afghanistan deserve our full acknowledgment.

Colombia deeply regrets the recent incidents and loss of lives, in particular the assassination of the Chairman of the High Peace Council, Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, who will be deeply missed by the international community. We express our profound condolences. As the Secretary-General has noted, such attacks may be part of an intimidation campaign to weaken the reconstruction and reconciliation dialogue. I therefore welcome the statement made today by the Minister for Foreign Affairs that, in spite of this and other violent acts, the reconciliation process will continue.

It is crucial to strengthen relations with local authorities and community leaders in order to facilitate a process of inclusive dialogue that will lead to reconciliation with all segments of the population. It is also essential not to waiver in our efforts to create a climate conducive to ensuring that the transfer of security sector responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces takes place in keeping with the agreed timetable, and that the Afghan forces will be able to assume that leadership by 2014. On that point, the efforts of the International Security Assistance Force and the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan will make a valuable contribution to enhancing the capacity and professionalism of the Afghan National Security Forces.

We underscore the timeliness of regional joint initiatives in order to combat the various dimensions of the global drug problem affecting Afghanistan and the region. The Secretary-General noted that while the eradication of poppy cultivation has increased by some 65 per cent as compared with 2010, the country remains the main source of opium and heroin. We agree with the Secretary-General that, given the global nature of the drug problem, it must be addressed in all its aspects based on common but differentiated responsibilities, with the contribution of the entire international community.

Afghanistan is facing a number of problems that could threaten the sustainability of the gains achieved so far. Violence remains a principal factor that has affected progress and led to an increased need for humanitarian assistance and increased numbers of civilian deaths and internally displaced persons. We call on all parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of civilians.

We agree with the Secretary-General with regard to the need to broaden the scope of the transitional process. While security is essential to restoring the rule of law, the exercise of fundamental freedoms and laying the foundation for economic progress, governance and rule of law are fundamental elements to guarantee a sustainable and definitive transition.

The international medium- and long-term commitment to Afghanistan must include aspects such as strengthened institutions, increased employment and economic opportunity and access to justice. Sustainable transition requires State structures able to guarantee governance and economic stability at all levels. That must be the aim of the international cooperation efforts in Afghanistan.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I am pleased to welcome Mr. Zalmai Rassoul and I would like to thank him for his statement. I thank Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his briefing and for his extraordinary leadership at the helm of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

I wish to express Brazil's condolences to the Afghan Government and people for the brutal assassination of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Chairman of the High Peace Council. His loss is a loss to the peace process as a whole. Afghans should not feel discouraged, however. They must find the strength in themselves and in the support of the international community to redouble efforts to promote reconciliation.

Despite the difficulties, the transition process towards Afghan security responsibility must continue to advance. But let us not forget that the military and political timetables must coincide. Until now, military developments have outpaced progress in national reconciliation. We expect all sectors of Afghan society to continue to seek constructive dialogue.

Recent security incidents demonstrate that, unfortunately, the tide of violence is not receding in Afghanistan. On the contrary, rates of civilian deaths and injuries have risen. Brazil reiterates the need for all concerned to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to abandon the use of tactics that indiscriminately target civilians.

In our high-level meeting on preventive diplomacy this past week (see S/PV.6621), many of us reaffirmed the need to address the link between poverty and violence. Socio-economic development must be central to our strategy for peace in Afghanistan. The peace process will stand a better chance of being embraced by all Afghans when they are able to realize that stability brings concrete improvements to their lives. In that sense, international support must fully abide by the principles of Afghan leadership and ownership.

As we approach the end of 2011, it is becoming clearer that dialogue is the path to a solution for the conflict in Afghanistan. This path must be strengthened by all of the means at our disposal. We hope that the international community will show strong support for Afghanistan during the Istanbul and the Bonn conferences. We welcome the focus of the Bonn Conference on the civilian aspects of the transition, including mediation, coordination of assistance and long-term international support to Afghanistan and the reconciliation process. Brazil will actively participate in the Conference.

At the same time, the regional dimension of the Istanbul Conference is particularly important to the future of Afghanistan. Global solutions to the conflict will have greater legitimacy and efficacy if underpinned by the concerns, perspectives and support of the countries of the region.

Brazil renews its commitment to working together with the Afghan people and Government towards a future of peace and prosperity.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and Mr. Rassoul for his statement. I endorse the statement to be made by the representative of the European Union.

We were obviously shocked and saddened by the attack that took the life of the former Afghan President and Chair of the High Peace Council, Mr. Rabbani. The terrorists are attempting to divert us from our goal; they must fail. The international community must rally around the message of unity and determination, as the Council did on 21 September and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) will continue to do in Kabul. Our aim remains to support the Afghan Government on its road to fully restored sovereignty in the framework of a consistent and determined transition process.

As to France, the President of the Republic announced our intention to reduce and redeploy our contingent in cooperation with our allies and the Afghan authorities. On the other hand, in parallel and in the same context, the civil component of our effort will gradually grow. France's engagement will not end in 2014, but it will have been changed by a friendship and cooperation agreement between France and Afghanistan to be signed this autumn.

These major changes are taking place in a difficult security context, as recalled by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/590). The insurgents have demonstrated their capacity to carry out complex attacks at the very heart of Kabul. The number of civilian victims has increased as compared to the past year thanks to the Taliban who no longer hesitate to kill in hospitals and in mosques. That being the case, the Afghan Security Forces are growing more powerful and have demonstrated their resolve to fight. We need to continue to focus on protecting civilians within the framework of the International Security Assistance Force. It is just as important to be able to demonstrate that we are fighting on behalf of values that preclude any practices that undermine human dignity.

The stabilization of Afghanistan entails its integration into a regional dynamic based on new rules. The Conference on the New Silk Road Initiative was an opportunity to reaffirm the importance for Afghanistan to once again become the centre of exchange that it was in the past. With regard to the ongoing military commitment and a vision for the economy, there is a need to think deeply about the regional parameters for security. We welcome the upcoming Conferences in Istanbul in November and in Bonn on 5 December, which will help us to move forward on all of those issues.

At the Kabul Conference last year, the goal of Afghanization was set forth with conditions — better management of public finances, reducing corruption, and the performance of the budget. The international community cannot continue to effectively carry out its commitment if those conditions are not met and agreement is not reached between the country's authorities and the International Monetary Fund to address the Kabul Bank crisis.

Moreover, Afghanistan cannot allow the institutional crisis that has been taking place since the last legislative elections to continue. We note the announcement by the Independent Election Commission to change the composition of the lower chamber. We call on all Afghan institutions to work in line with their respective purviews, in the framework set out in the Constitution and the principle of the separation of powers. That episode makes it all the more necessary to carry out genuine electoral reform with the support of the United Nations.

We are convinced that the United Nations in general, and UNAMA in particular, will have a major role to play in Afghanistan in coming years. Its presence and its mandates will change based on the transition. We look forward to the results of the strategic review requested of the Secretary-General in resolution 1974 (2011).

We would like to conclude by commending the efforts of Special Representative Staffan de Mistura, who has led UNAMA with great skill and the vision necessary to refocus its actions and help it through dramatic moments. I also pay tribute to the personnel of UNAMA, who at the request of the Security Council and UNAMA are working in challenging and dangerous conditions in favour of the stabilization, security and development of Afghanistan.

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): We would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan Staffan de Mistura for introducing the Secretary-General's report on that country (S/2011/590). South Africa also welcomes and appreciates the participation at this debate of Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

At the outset, allow me, on behalf of my delegation, to extend our sincere condolences to the Afghan Government and people following the assassination of Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, former President of Afghanistan and Chair of the High Peace Council. We join other members of the Council in condemning that assassination in the strongest possible terms — a malicious attack that is an unfortunate setback to efforts aimed at political reconciliation.

We note that the report of the Secretary-General paints a bleak picture, as violence has increased over the past year. Although Afghanistan has begun its journey to peace and stability, a number of challenges remain. Those challenges, in our view, are not insurmountable. With the committed assistance of the international community, Afghanistan can finally chart its own path through its own leadership in a process that is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.

On the political front, South Africa welcomes the relatively positive developments that have taken place over the past few months, especially the announcement of the swearing in of the nine new members of the lower house of the Afghan National Assembly. That, in our view, lays the foundation for the stabilization of the political process in Afghanistan. We are pleased to note that the Afghan Government has committed itself to resolving all outstanding issues within a legal and political framework. South Africa continues to welcome efforts to strengthen political outreach activities. Political dialogue and reconciliation are critical for the Afghan people and their Government.

The situation of children, youth and women should continue to receive the highest attention during this transition. South Africa commends the advocacy work led by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) within civil society aimed at involving women in decision-making structures. Our view is that women have a critical role to play in the political, economic and social development of the country.

As we have stated previously, our delegation continues to believe that there is an inextricable link between development and security in Afghanistan. We are pleased that the Afghan Government continues with its commitment to address the socio-economic situation facing the country. In that context, we encourage the Government to increase its efforts aimed at improving its institutional capacity to offer viable alternatives to poppy cultivation and narcotics.

National ownership and leadership remain crucial to political security and socio-economic progress in Afghanistan. The international community should continue its supportive role in the country's transition from conflict to stability and prosperity. South Africa therefore continues to support the presence and the role of UNAMA in Afghanistan.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): Like others, I too wish to welcome Minister Rassoul to our meeting today and to thank him for his very important statement. I would like to say a special word of thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for his very comprehensive and, as

usual, very lucid briefing. Let me also once again commend him, his staff and his team for their constant efforts and their perseverance in the midst of a very difficult, dangerous and complex situation.

The statement by Minister Rassoul, the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/590) and the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General have covered the essential aspects of the situation in Afghanistan. Portugal naturally associates itself with the statement that will be delivered later by the observer of the European Union.

This summer has indeed been a difficult season in Afghanistan. One of the most disturbing aspects of this difficult summer — as the Special Representative underlined — has been the political assassinations targeting notable figures at the national, regional and Government levels, of which Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, former President of Afghanistan and Chair of the High Peace Council, is the latest victim. Let me reiterate my country's utter condemnation of that murder and extend our condolences, through the Foreign Minister, to the Government and the people of Afghanistan.

Those assassinations are one more effort to distract us and the Afghan people from what is happening on the ground — the gradual normalization of the country and, ultimately, the defeat of the enemies of a democratic Afghanistan. As the Minister has said, however, we are confident that the reconciliation process will continue and achieve peace in Afghanistan.

With regard to transition, we note that regions undergoing that process face, as the Secretary-General mentioned, resilient insurgency. It is not surprising that those areas are particularly targeted by insurgents, who know that the Afghan and international efforts against them will be judged by how the transition evolves. It is also natural for national institutions at the security and public service levels to show themselves in autonomous action before the Afghan people and to deliver. In that regard, allow me to quote once more the Secretary-General's report, in saying that what is needed is

> "effective governance and delivery of services to the population. The momentum behind the security transition should not be at the expense of, or outstrip, efforts to invest in governance and development processes". (*S/2011/590, para. 59*)

We also take positive note of the separation of the sanctions regimes regarding Al-Qaida and the Taliban and the de-listing of a number of individuals. We believe it was a useful measure towards dialogue and national reconciliation in Afghanistan.

The High Peace Council and the Salaam Support Group, in which the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) plays an important assistance role, are an unequivocally valuable tool for fostering dialogue and outreach inside and outside Afghanistan. Their relevance has only been reinforced by the recent attacks on its President. We are sure that the Special Representative will pursue his engagement of the High Peace Council leadership, despite the latest events.

At a regional level, the initiatives of Afghanistan and its neighbours are noteworthy. Once more integrated within its region and closer to its immediate neighbours than ever before, Afghanistan is recovering its place in the world and widening the horizons of countless Afghans. The opportunity for business, connectivity, investment and regional economic cooperation will, I am sure, strengthen the country's independence and institutions and improve the lot of ordinary Afghans.

Civilian casualties have been increasing in numbers, notably due to suicide attacks cruelly designed and undertaken against civilian targets, such as hospitals and mosques. Those are, by any account, crimes whose victims require justice and whose perpetrators renew, at every occasion, their lack of legitimacy to represent Afghans or Afghanistan.

Moreover, the use of children as soldiers and as deliverers of weapons and explosive devices by anti-Government forces is particularly heinous. That practice, perhaps before any other, must be stopped, and we welcome the efforts of the Afghan Government regarding the recruitment and use of children by its security forces. We hope that further progress can be achieved within a short time frame.

The protection of civilians needs greater attention as the numbers of their victims rise. That is a task, I believe, that is too important and too essential for the national reconciliation of Afghanistan to be left without the strong participation, indeed ownership, of Afghan institutions. Providing relief, care and compensation to civilian victims is possible and feasible within Afghan means, legislation and tradition.

Portugal follows with the utmost attention the situation of Afghan women, and wholeheartedly supports the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan and of UNAMA to promote and protect the human rights of women and in advocating and monitoring implementation of the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women, as well as in promoting the political participation of women in peace and reconciliation processes.

I would also like to mention UNAMA's assistance to the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. I believe that the mainstreaming of human rights into the justice system, and the independent monitoring thereof, will surely reinforce the rule of law and the legitimacy of the institutions.

I have a couple of words regarding the humanitarian situation and the counter-narcotics efforts. Food assistance to hundreds of thousands in Afghanistan will be needed in the coming months. That situation, beyond its evident humanitarian dimension, is an emerging threat to the security situation as well, as it may very well help in reversing the progress achieved in counter-insurgency.

As regards the growing opium production, in itself a very worrying development beyond its connection to terrorism, Portugal encourages the Government to pursue its national counter-drugs policy, but also to seek regional solutions, including by sharing information, material and strategies, to the cross-border issues raised by drug trafficking and its link to other forms of international crime.

I conclude by sharing the Secretary-General's view of the requirements for a successful transition: the recognition that development, governance and the rule of law are crucial; the need for capturing momentum and accelerating sustainable development activities; assessing operational and support costs for development projects; and long-term international support and private sector investment.

The coming Istanbul and Bonn conferences will allow us to start discussing such decisive issues very soon. They will be the stepping stones towards winning the battle of peace, stability and economic and social development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I wish to welcome Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Mr. Rassoul for his presence at this meeting, and I thank him for his statement. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. De Mistura for his briefing.

Through the efforts of the Afghan Government and people, progress has been made in the Afghan peace and reconstruction process. The results are encouraging. However, challenges also lie ahead. The security situation in Afghanistan remains unstable. Terrorist attacks occur from time to time. Economic development is slow. Comprehensive stability and reconstruction will be a long process. It requires the unremitting efforts of the Afghan Government and people. It also needs the continued support and assistance of the international community. In that regard, I would like to underscore the following five points.

First, China is seriously concerned about the worsening security situation and the increasing number of civilian casualties. We hope that, in the transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan Government, the parties concerned will earnestly assume the responsibilities to help Afghanistan strengthen its security capacity-building in order to ensure a peaceful and stable transition.

Secondly, China supports Afghanistan in its continued efforts to push through the Kabul process. In order to achieve Afghan peace, stability and development, there is a need to fully respect its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity so as to genuinely achieve an Afghanistan run by Afghans.

Thirdly, China supports the peace and reintegration programme led by the Afghan Government. In China, we express our shock and condolences at the tragic death of former President of Afghanistan Professor Rabbani following the attack on him and condemn the attack. China fully respects the Afghan Government and people in their choice of their own accord and hopes to see progress in its peace and reintegration programme.

Fourthly, the international community must support Afghanistan in its comprehensive economic and social development. Parties need to deliver and meet their commitments to assist Afghanistan. The priorities identified by Afghan themselves in the context of the Afghan National Development Strategy must also be respected and implemented. The relevant initiatives for Afghan economic reconstruction will be

seriously considered. We believe that we need to fully heed the views of the Afghan Government and people and to respect their sovereignty and ownership. Regional countries must become involved and their views be fully taken into account. The relevant initiatives need to be implemented on the basis of full consultations and consensus among the parties.

Fifthly, China appreciates the active efforts of the United Nations to push through the Afghan peace and reconstruction process. China supports the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in its continued leading role in coordinating aid to support the Afghan peace and reconstruction. We hope that UNAMA will strengthen its communication, coordination and cooperation with the Afghan Government.

As a friendly neighbour of Afghanistan, China is consistently committed to good-neighbourliness and friendship between the two countries. China attaches importance to and actively participates in the Afghan reconstruction process. China will continue to provide assistance to Afghanistan within its capabilities, and will work with the international community to contribute to an early achievement of peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I welcome His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, to the Council and thank him for his statement. We are grateful for the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/590) and appreciate the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura.

We are deeply concerned that the overall security environment in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. The latest Secretary-General's report notes that the average monthly number of security incidents is up 39 per cent as compared to the same period in 2010. While the process of transition of security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces has been ongoing since July 2011, it is, indeed, worrisome that there has been no let-up in terrorist violence.

The Taliban has opted for attacking high-security targets, assassinations and launching complex suicide attacks in urban centres, including Kabul. Important political figures and Government officials have been killed in the recent past, including Ahmad Wali Karzai, Chair of the Kandahar Provincial Council, and Ghulam Haydar Hamidi, the Mayor of Kandahar. The Intercontinental Hotel, the British Council and the United States Embassy in Kabul have also been targeted.

We unreservedly condemn last week's assassination of Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, Chair of the High Peace Council and former President of Afghanistan. Tragically, the forces of terror and hatred have silenced yet another powerful voice of reason and peace in Afghanistan.

As we have repeatedly stressed in the Security Council, such attacks point to a dangerous osmosis of ideologies, ambitions, training and operations among the syndicate of terrorism in the region, with suicide terrorism as its main technique and targets not limited to Afghanistan. The resilience of insurgents and their ability to target areas otherwise considered safe and secure is a grim reminder that the security gains are still tenuous.

For peace, stability and security in Afghanistan, it is imperative that the ongoing transition be linked to the realities on the ground, rather than rigid timetables. In its hurry to withdraw from a combat role in Afghanistan, the international community will only ignore that at its own peril.

The latest report (S/2011/590) of the Secretary-General underscores that, for the success of the transition, it is important that the Afghan National Security Forces continue to demonstrate enhanced independent capability and professionalism to assume an increasing level of responsibility and accountability. We support the further strengthening of the Afghan National Security Forces, which must go hand in hand with the enhancement of their capabilities and adequate enablers. It is important that the transition be Afghan-owned and planned and implemented in a systematic manner. It must also ensure the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans.

For the security and stabilization of Afghanistan, it is important to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of the Al-Qaida, Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups operating within and outside Afghanistan's borders. These groups are ideologically and operationally fused, and their bonds have strengthened over the years. It will not be possible to

consolidate the gains on the security front unless the international community is able to firmly deal with safe havens for terrorist groups outside Afghanistan's borders.

We fully support an Afghan-led, inclusive and transparent process of reconciliation, adhering to the red lines enunciated by the Afghan Government in the Kabul and London communiqués. As we have stressed earlier, that must be accompanied by an inclusive political process and intra-Afghan dialogue and include a renunciation of violence, the cutting of ties to terrorist groups and respect for the Afghan Constitution, with its protections for human rights, including the rights of women.

Afghan ownership and leadership are also vital to development and reconstruction in Afghanistan. That also implies greater coherence, coordination and further streamlining of the international community's development-related efforts, including aligning assistance with Afghan national priorities and increasingly working through Afghan institutions. We are happy to note efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in that regard.

With the onset of the drawdown of foreign security forces and the transition process, it is all the more important for the international community — especially the countries of the region — to remain committed in this crucial phase, when Afghan national institutions are still being developed and consolidated.

It is also important that Afghanistan's growth strategy be built upon the country's comparative advantage of abundant natural resources and its strategic geographical location. Those will have to be the building blocks of our vision for Afghanistan as a hub lining Central and South Asia through pipelines, trade and transit routes for the common good of the people of our region and the world. We support the New Silk Road Initiative, which is an important step in that direction.

India remains committed to partnering with the Government and people of Afghanistan in the building of a peaceful, stable, democratic and pluralistic nation. India's assistance programme is spread across Afghanistan, spanning almost the entire gamut of economic and social development activities. We are undertaking reconstruction and development activities in Afghanistan with a total bilateral assistance commitment of approximately $2 billion. We have placed special emphasis on capacity building and human resource development, which, in our opinion, are the building blocks for a robust and self-reliant economy.

Indian companies have evinced interest in the exploitation of Afghanistan's iron ore reserves. India is also participating in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline project. Those are projects that call for large investment. We express our resolve to cooperate with Afghanistan on plans involving regional integration for the mutual benefit of all stakeholders.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, of which Afghanistan is a full member, is an important vehicle for regional economic cooperation within the South Asia region. We have always considered Afghanistan as a South Asian country with natural complementarities and synergies with other countries of South Asia, and one that is uniquely placed to build bridges even beyond it. India's rapidly growing economy and its large market make it a natural destination for Afghan exports. Similarly, India can be a cost-effective and efficient source of Afghan imports.

As the security transition moves forward, Afghanistan needs the long-term commitment and support of the international community. We look forward to the forthcoming Istanbul and Bonn Conferences and the comprehensive review of UNAMA's mandated activities and United Nations support in Afghanistan by the end of this year. We hope that this will contribute to efforts towards lasting peace and the stability, economic sustainability and regional integration of Afghanistan in the years ahead.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Lebanon.

I would like to begin by joining my colleagues in thanking Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing and his efforts in that country. I should also like once again to welcome Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, as well as to thank him for his statement and his presence here. I should now like to make a few comments.

With the beginning of the gradual handover of responsibility for security to Afghan authorities, the difficult security situation continues to be a source of major concern for Afghans as well as for the international community. Undoubtedly, the resolution adopted to increase the number and preparedness of national military forces will contribute to improving the security situation in the country.

In the light of the increasing number of civilian losses and injuries, we reiterate our call on all parties to abide scrupulously with the provisions of international humanitarian law and to do everything possible to protect innocent persons from violence, as well as mosques and hospitals, which have not been spared from attack in recent months.

Lebanon condemns the assassination of Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, former President and Chair of the High Peace Council (HPC), which was intended to undermine the efforts made by the Council to achieve dialogue and reconciliation among all components of Afghan society. We extend our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Afghanistan, including the family of the deceased.

In that context, we call for moving ahead with the policy of dialogue, reconciliation and confidence-building as the only alternative to violence, with a view to achieving the desired peace.

The sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) will have an important role to play in ensuring the success of the HPC in a matter that is of no less importance than the political and security situation. We call for decisive efforts to improve the human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly by enforcing the law prohibiting violence against women and protecting women from injustice, coercion and discrimination, as our Organization demands. Although the efforts of UNAMA have yet to stem the tide of violence and injustice against women, they have helped to mitigate it. In that regard, we welcome UNAMA's focus on situations of arbitrary detention and detainee abuse and on guaranteeing fair trials, which are prerequisites for good governance and the rule of law.

Perhaps the most horrendous situation described in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/590) is the ongoing recruitment of children by the various parties to the conflict for military and even sexual purposes. We call for zero tolerance for that phenomenon and due punishment for those responsible, with the aim of preventing such abuse.

I also recall the importance of moving ahead with the implementation of the provisions of the Kabul process, and look forward to agreement on the International Monetary Fund country programme, the absence of which would adversely affect the reconstruction and socio-economic development of Afghanistan.

At the regional and international levels, we welcome the efforts of Afghanistan's neighbouring States to consolidate security and economic cooperation, particularly with respect to border control and the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism. The stability and prosperity of Afghanistan will have an impact on the region, and we look forward to the convening of the Istanbul and Bonn Conferences in the coming months. They represent the international community's reaffirmation of its commitment to supporting Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we reiterate our appreciation for the efforts of the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, in all fields. The Organization is working with courage and resolve in difficult security conditions for a better future for Afghanistan, a country rich in civilization, potential and yearning for peace and progress.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Rishchynski (Canada): Let me begin by thanking Foreign Minister Rassoul for his presence today with us and for his statement to the Security Council this morning. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing today and for the continued good work being done by him and his team in Afghanistan.

As we near the end of 2011, representatives from the Afghan Government, its neighbouring countries and all their international partners will take part in a series of regional and international meetings that will culminate with the Bonn Conference on 5 December. These meetings will allow us to work together towards achieving tangible results for the transition of responsibilities for governance and security to the Afghan government. The new Bonn Conference will

also be an opportunity to strengthen our common vision of a better-governed and more stable Afghanistan that will never again serve as a refuge for terrorists.

A sustainable transition of responsibilities for governance and security to the Afghan Government is central to this vision and will remain at the forefront of our efforts. With this objective in mind, we need to rely strongly on the progress that has been made since 2001 in order to continue to support Afghan efforts towards political reconciliation, increased regional cooperation, and strong and more autonomous Afghan institutions that are able to provide essential services to the people of Afghanistan.

Through its renewed engagement in Afghanistan, Canada maintains its fundamental objective of contributing to the country's reconstruction as a complement to the priorities identified by the Afghan Government and the international community in the context of the Kabul process in 2010. In this regard, we are satisfied with the work that the standing committees of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board accomplished over the summer, and look forward to the Board meeting scheduled to take place next month. Canada's new engagement until 2014 will build on our significant experience and investments in Afghanistan to date, and sustain progress in key areas that are essential to a better future, such as the future of Afghan children and youth, security, the rule of law and respect for human rights, regional diplomacy and the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Children and youth are the country's future. Using effective and accountable development assistance, Canada will continue to invest in education and health, building on our significant contribution to date in these areas. Canada will continue to support the Afghan Government in improving access to quality primary and secondary education, especially for girls and young women. We will also continue working on the transparency and accountability of the Afghan national educational sector to help foster a secure learning environment for all children. Today, over 2.2 million Afghan girls go to school. This is a dramatic increase over the number in 2001, when girls were forbidden to attend school. Moreover, 29 per cent of the 158,000 teachers in Afghanistan are women, a significant increase to the 21,000 there were in 2002. In the health sector, Canada will help the Afghan Government in its work to improve maternal, newborn and child health.

Canada is also renewing its commitment to the Afghan Government and its international partners to supporting the Kabul process and meet the objectives of the national priority programmes in terms of education, health and human rights, especially for Afghan women and girls. Particular attention must be paid to the rights of Afghan women in particular. They are at the forefront of Canada's development efforts in Afghanistan. Canada has committed to providing peace and security to all through its Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

(*spoke in French*)

The violent incidents that took place over the summer, including a number of political assassinations and attacks on civilian targets, as well as the recent attacks on the International Security Assistance Force, the American embassy and Afghan security in Kabul, remind us of the importance of tirelessly continuing our efforts to improve the security situation in Afghanistan. To that end, it is essential that we increase the capacities of the Afghan National Security Forces, which will assume responsibility for security in Afghanistan in 2014.

The Afghan forces will soon have reached the required number of personnel under the objectives of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan. The continued development of professional skills and institutional capabilities will therefore be at the forefront of the continued mission until 2014. By contributing to the efforts of the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan, Canada will help to implement a security force with the discipline, professionalism and efficiency required to ensure the country's stability and to promote peace and economic development for the population.

Moreover, the credibility and professionalism of the Afghan National Police are essential to the country's stability, to the people's and communities' sense of security, and to strengthening the rule of law in Afghanistan and respect for human rights. Canada will therefore support the training of the Afghan National Security Forces by providing up to 950 instructors and support staff to the NATO Training Mission for the next three years. In addition, the deployment of 45 police officers who will help train

members of the Afghan National Police will contribute to these same objectives. It is essential that the continued support of Canada and the international community to Afghan transition be based on the implementation of credible reforms by the Afghan Government that will strengthen the confidence of donors, investors and the Afghan people.

Canada is pleased that the transition of responsibilities for governance and security is already well under way in a number of districts in Afghanistan. According to the joint assessment of the Afghan Government and the NATO mission, the first tranche of Afghan districts studied have now successfully assumed responsibility for their governance and for their security.

That said, stability in Afghanistan cannot be achieved by military force alone. We strongly condemn the assassination of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of the Afghanistan High Peace Council. That cowardly and brutal act must not slow the efforts of the Afghan people towards reconciliation. The political reconciliation efforts led by Afghans must include dialogue with all stakeholders in society, including women and vulnerable persons.

Canada supports the efforts being made by Afghanistan to establish a dialogue with those who have renounced violence, respect the Constitution, and have no ties with Al-Qaida or other terrorist groups.

(*spoke in English*)

It is also by relying on lessons learned that Afghanistan can continue its progress towards a transparent democracy that listens to its people. In this regard, we have noted the great efforts made by the Afghan Government and all parliamentarians to resolve the parliamentary election deadlock, and we hope that these recent developments will finally allow Parliament to fully assume its role in the governance of the Afghan State. We encourage the Afghan Government, the Parliament and all stakeholders involved to continue their efforts to promote the electoral reforms needed to further develop democracy in Afghanistan. Strong, transparent and democratic institutions must be the basis for the reconstruction of a strong Afghan Government that is willing to serve all of its citizens.

Canada also believes that the prospect of a prosperous and stable Afghanistan is conceivable only in the context of increased regional cooperation and integration. In this regard, Canada welcomes the New Silk Road initiative. We are very pleased by the prospect of helping to further develop this project, which will be an important element of the Bonn conference, and this in close collaboration with the Afghan Government and other international partners. Moreover, the Canadian Government will continue its efforts to promote dialogue and propose concrete measures to improve cooperation between countries in the region, especially Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Since 2001, substantial progress has been made in establishing and coordinating regional cooperation and planning mechanisms. Canada will continue to make the most of those gains to create a sustainable regional engagement strategy, notably by supporting efficient methods of managing the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan so as to promote legitimate trade. Regional diplomacy is one of our key priorities for engagement between now and 2014.

In conclusion, over the past 10 years Afghanistan and its partners have endeavoured to create an Afghanistan that is more democratic and more responsible for its own security and governance. Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, 157 members of the Canadian armed forces, as well as a diplomat, a journalist and three humanitarian workers from Canada, have all been killed. It is now up to all of us to maintain a strong engagement in Afghanistan in order to honour these sacrifices and those of the Afghan people, who have fought for peace in the country to ensure the sustainability of the progress made to date. I can assure the Council that Canada will not renounce its efforts to work with Afghanistan so that it can become a peaceful, secure and stable country that will never again serve as a refuge for terrorists.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Let me begin by warmly greeting His Excellency Minister Ambassador Rassoul and Special Representative Staffan de Mistura. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/590) and the Special Representative for his briefing.

Before I go any further, I would like to express once again our sorrow and indignation at the assassination of Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, Chairman of the High Peace Council and former President of Afghanistan. We strongly condemn this heinous attack and offer our deepest sympathy and sincere

condolences to his family as well as to the people and the Government of Afghanistan. We also wish a speedy recovery to Mr. Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, Chief Executive of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme.

It is incumbent upon Afghanistan and all of us to make sure that Mr. Rabbani's death will not have been in vain. Such attacks will not and cannot deter the Afghans and the international community from the pursuit of a peaceful, secure and democratic Afghanistan. It will certainly take time and dedicated efforts, but it is critical that credible progress be made towards reintegration and reconciliation. Thus we continue to strongly encourage Afghanistan's regional and international partners to continue to provide the necessary support to these efforts as requested by Afghanistan.

In addition to Mr. Rabbani's assassination, we have seen a recent spate of attacks by the insurgents against high-profile Afghan and international targets, as also enumerated in the Secretary-General's report. These attacks show that the security situation remains fragile. They are also an indication that recent developments, both in Afghanistan and in the region, increase the risks and challenges faced in the transition process that has recently been put into motion. A careful handling of these challenges will enable us to correctly identify the problems and find the necessary solutions. At the same time, we are convinced that the response of the Afghan military and police to the attacks have overall been effective. We consider this to be an important indicator of the fact that the training provided to the Afghan National security forces has begun to bear fruit. We should relentlessly continue our efforts in this area.

Our common objective in Afghanistan is to ensure that the Afghans have the means and capabilities to take charge of their future in a fully and meaningfully sovereign Afghan State. Afghanistan's neighbours and partners have important contributions to make and should continue their multidimensional efforts towards the solidification of Afghanistan's sovereign institutions.

Two important events relating to Afghanistan scheduled for later this year will provide opportunities to realize these goals. In December, we will meet in Bonn, at the gracious invitation of the German Government, to discuss and to define the long-term engagement of the international community in Afghanistan. We have established 2014 as the target date for the transfer of security responsibilities to Afghanistan. However, as we have said numerous times, this is not the date for an exit and the end of our commitment to Afghanistan. After 2014, the international community will continue to be engaged comprehensively in Afghanistan, albeit in a transformed manner.

Before the Bonn meeting, on 2 November we will hold the Istanbul Conference on Afghanistan, on the theme "Security and Cooperation in the Heart of Asia". We hope that this meeting will be a milestone event in terms of charting the way forward for regional security cooperation.

Afghanistan today is at a critical juncture. It still faces significant security, political, economic and development challenges that transcend its borders. Those challenges cannot be addressed without the constructive support of Afghanistan's neighbours and regional partners. Efforts to meet such challenges are most effective when they are regionally owned and driven and pursued in a transparent and constructive manner. In that regard, the conference will be an essentially Afghan-led event with Turkish facilitation, but it will be critical for all participants to display full ownership, leadership and vision. Therefore, it is most encouraging that all the participants have told us that they are ready to show the necessary level of commitment.

There have been a number of initiatives so far that have been aimed at contributing to enhanced ties among the countries of the region. All of those initiatives have been pertinent to our joint endeavours. What we will try to do in Istanbul is not duplicate them but rather borrow their most useful aspects and try to build on them in order to achieve complementarity and added value. What we hope to achieve is the creation of a regional security and cooperation initiative, with a view to building greater confidence in the political, security and military fields and to strengthening cooperation in the economic, trade, environmental, cultural, energy and drug-control fields.

As always, we look forward to the strong support of the international community. We have already started the preparations and are working closely with Afghanistan, the United Nations and all other relevant countries and organizations. As we speak, our

representatives are travelling to Oslo for a preparatory meeting tomorrow, which will be followed by another one in Kabul on 15 October. My country remains steadfast in its commitment to, and support for, Afghanistan. In that vein, we will do our utmost so that the conference brings forth concrete deliverables that reflect Afghan goals and visions.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to acknowledge once more the dedicated and outstanding work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is carrying out in fulfilment of its mandate in the face of very real and serious threats in Afghanistan. We are particularly grateful for the effective leadership shown by Special Representative Staffan de Mistura. We are also thankful to him for his valuable contributions. UNAMA's work in Afghanistan is critical now, and will remain so later on. As such, UNAMA has our full support.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Security Council today. I also wish to thank Foreign Minister Rassoul and Special Representative De Mistura, for both their presence and their leadership. Australia continues to strongly support the work of the United Nations in Afghanistan and reaffirms its commitment to international efforts in support of Afghanistan.

A sustainable transition beyond 2014 requires genuine long-term engagement by the global community. As our Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions, we will remain engaged in Afghanistan through this decade at least. We see that continuing beyond. Following the conclusion of the transition in 2014, we will continue to provide civilian and development assistance, training and other defence cooperation.

Since the Council's debate on Afghanistan in March (see S/PV.6497), we have seen some worrying security developments, especially the increased momentum of the campaign of intimidation and targeted assassinations. Despite these serious concerns, our own assessment is that the fundamental trajectory on the security front is in the right direction, which is why we think that the insurgents are resorting to the sort of dramatic attacks we are seeing.

We have seen the successful beginning of the security transition in the first tranche of provinces and districts announced by President Karzai in July. Afghan forces themselves are performing increasingly well and effectively. We admire that.

The current campaign of terror is very worrying, but we must not allow it to derail the transition. We condemn the shocking murder Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, former Afghan President and Chair of the High Peace Council. We extend our deepest condolences to the people and Government of Afghanistan for his loss. But the process he embodied must continue. We reiterate our support to the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to advance an inclusive peace and reconciliation process, as well as for the successful reintegration of former fighters into Afghan society.

It is encouraging to hear President Karzai's statement that the people and Government of Afghanistan remain undeterred. It is essential that the international community stand forthrightly with the Government and people of Afghanistan at this time.

A sustainable transition to Afghan security leadership will obviously depend on continued improvements in governance and development. In Uruzgan, where an Australian leads the provincial reconstruction team and where Australian security forces are concentrated, we are seeing progress; but that progress is fragile. We need to remain serious about protecting the gains that we have been made. More important, we need to focus much more intensively on building the capacity of the Afghan institutions in Uruzgan so that they can deliver concrete and consistent results on the ground.

We were pleased to participate in the ministerial meeting on Afghanistan held here in New York on 22 September, which provided a clear message of support for the New Silk Road concept. The vision behind that concept will be a critical element in accomplishing the security transition and to advancing regional economic development, which would underpin long-term security. A lot of work needs to be done to give that vision real substance, but we have to make the effort. It is encouraging to note that some infrastructure projects under the initiative have already begun. That work is absolutely essential to creating a strong network of trade and economic linkages across

the region and to providing the Afghan people with a long-term vision of economic prosperity.

Constructive engagement by Afghanistan's neighbours is critical to the prospect of a secure and prosperous Afghanistan and, in turn, for the Central Asian region itself. Australia welcomes the Istanbul conference to be hosted under Turkey's very constructive leadership and supported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). A successful meeting in Istanbul will provide important and essential support for the Bonn meeting to be held in December. In Bonn, the international community and the Government of Afghanistan will need to demonstrate a robust and coordinated approach to building a stable, secure and prosperous country. Much more work is needed over coming months to ensure that we can achieve that result.

The role of United Nations agencies in coordinating development and humanitarian assistance is obviously becoming increasingly prominent as transition proceeds. Australia supports UNAMA's efforts to improve aid coherence and to encourage longer-term commitment to development. We ourselves are committed to working closely with donors and the Afghan Government. That includes support for capacity building in the mining and agriculture sectors, which we think will become a firm basis for much of the economy of Afghanistan in the near term.

Our own development assistance increased by 35 per cent in the past year. Afghanistan is now the fourth largest recipient of Australian aid. Our overall aid budget will increase to $10 billion in the next couple of years. That support to Afghanistan will continue to increase.

Before I conclude, I would like to take a moment to remember those civilians who have been killed or wounded in Afghanistan since 2001. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/590) notes, we have seen an increase in civilian deaths and casualties, largely due to the continued use of improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks. Australia urges all parties involved in the armed conflict in Afghanistan to strengthen efforts to protect Afghan civilians.

In conclusion, I would like to express our appreciation for the strong leadership demonstrated by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Staffan de Mistura, and the dedication and sacrifice of UNAMA personnel working in Afghanistan. We strongly supports all efforts to ensure that those who work in support of Afghanistan's future are able to do so with the necessary security to complete their difficult but indispensable tasks. We will continue to work with the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, through the Fifth Committee, to ensure that the necessary finances are made available for that.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): I would like to thank Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, for his presence here today and for his statement. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for his very comprehensive and informative briefing. And I would like to take this opportunity to express Japan's gratitude to all the men and women of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) who have demonstrated their deep commitment to this very difficult mission.

At the outset, I would like to join my colleagues and previous speakers to express my sincere condolences for the demise of Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, Chair of Afghanistan's High Peace Council. Japan expresses its firm condemnation of such atrocious acts of terrorism.

As we have seen from various instances, the security situation in Afghanistan continues to be challenging. There have been targeted assassinations of high-ranking officials and suicide attacks, as described in the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/590). Security remains a priority that we have to tackle.

It is significant that the process of transferring security responsibility officially started in July. As I have stated on previous occasions, it is indispensable to peace and security in Afghanistan that a smooth transition be conducted during the drawdown of United States and other international forces, including by strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces. During this period, Japan continues to play its part towards achieving these goals through assistance to the Afghan National Police.

The transition and sustainable security are interlinked with the political process. The loss of Mr. Rabbani further underscores the importance of

continuing on the road of reconciliation and reintegration that he spearheaded. In light of this tragedy, it is important that all Afghanistan's leaders stand together in solidarity and demonstrate their resolve to work in support of peace, reconciliation and national unity. Now is the time for international partners to contribute to the advancement of the political process. Japan is determined to continue making our contribution to achieving irreversible progress in the Afghan-led reintegration programme.

The working group on reintegration of the International Contact Group met here last week, chaired by Ambassador Tanin and co-chaired by the United Kingdom and Japan. The group reaffirmed its commitment to the Afghan Government's programmes to reintegrate all those insurgents who are verifiably willing to renounce violence and terrorism and respect the Afghan Constitution, noting the need to provide support to their families in order to facilitate this.

To ensure long-term stability in Afghanistan, we have to accelerate regional cooperation among its neighbours. Japan will play an active role in strengthening regional economic cooperation to pave the way for integrating Afghanistan into the regional and global economy.

We appreciate the initiative of Germany, Afghanistan and the United States to co-chair the ministerial meeting on the New Silk Road last week. Japan supports the basic concept of the New Silk Road. Japan attaches importance to the following three points for advancing regional economic cooperation: first is to place emphasis on the southern route, which connects Afghanistan with the Indian Ocean; second is to promote the development of transport infrastructure, contributing to the growth of agriculture, which absorbs approximately 80 per cent of Afghanistan's labour population; and third is assistance to border control and customs procedures.

Japan believes that there is a firm commitment on the part the international community to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We expect to see further progress at the Istanbul Conference in November and the Bonn Conference in December. On the Afghan side, the country needs to strengthen its capacity for achieving real Afghan ownership and leadership.

Let me conclude by referring to the address by the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, at the General Assembly, in which he said:

> "In order to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a breeding ground for terrorism, we will continue to confront the problem with strong resolve." (*A/66/PV.19*)

We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the dedication of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura, and once again reiterate our commitment to supporting the dedication and tireless efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, let me thank Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the friendly nation of Afghanistan, for their informative briefings on the situation in Afghanistan.

Kyrgyzstan has a stake in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. We welcome the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to pursue democratic reforms and implement a national development plan for the country. We believe that effectively advancing the Kabul process is important. Kyrgyzstan continues to be of the firm view that lasting solutions to the ongoing problems in Afghanistan and effectively tackling transnational challenges requires a systemic and comprehensive approach. This must include political, economic and humanitarian aspects and calls for joint action by all stakeholders, with the United Nations central among them.

Illegal drug-trafficking and organized crime are a serious barrier to development, not only for Afghanistan but also the entire Central Asian region. Kyrgyzstan therefore views the Afghan problem in the regional context, and we welcome the country's participation in regional projects. In the light of new realities, Kyrgyzstan proposes that the international community step up its attention to Afghanistan, particularly in strengthening border security, assisting and countering illegal drug trafficking, training personnel and taking a broader approach to studying the impact of the growth of terrorist or radical groups.

We believe that any decision to withdraw troops of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan should be taken after the situation there has been tangibly stabilized. The key tasks of training

and genuinely strengthening the Afghan National Army and Police must also be addressed to ensure that they can assume the functions of ensuring the country's security.

Kyrgyzstan favours the effective implementation of the United Nations strategy to combat illegal drug trafficking and transnational crime in Central Asia, and advocates enhanced joint action in this area. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia should be an important component in the strengthening of regional security. A key outcome of its activities was the crafting of the plan of action for the implementation in the Central Asian region of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, whose adoption is planned to take place before the end of the year.

We are certain that restoring peace and strengthening Government power in Afghanistan depends not only on the use of force but to a great extent on the pace and methods by which social and economic challenges are addressed. We call on the countries of the region and the international community in the framework of the United Nations to modify the long-term economic recovery programme for Afghanistan so that its implementation will involve all neighbouring and adjacent countries.

Cooperation through the New Silk Road initiative is key to the countries of Central Asia is. Kyrgyzstan intends to actively participate in the initiative and in the activities of the various contact groups on Afghanistan with respect to recovery and development.

We believe that this situation can be fundamentally changed by implementing major economic projects in Afghanistan. One such strategic area is the implementation of the Central Asia South Asia Regional Electricity Market Project, or CASA-1000, which provides for the transmission of electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. On 19 and 20 September, Kyrgyzstan held a meeting of the Intergovernmental Board of CASA-1000 at which a memo of mutual understanding on the electricity transmission project and on further development of the regional electricity market for Central and South Asia. Kyrgyzstan is also participating in the implementation of an international railway project between China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran that will undoubtedly contribute to the social and economic development of Afghanistan and the region in general.

Kyrgyzstan is participating in international efforts to improve the situation in Afghanistan at the bilateral and multilateral levels. In particular, together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, on 9 July 2010 we began a project for training Afghan customs officials at the customs training centre of the State Customs Service of the Kyrgyz Republic. We believe it is important to expand our partnership in this area. Our hope is that the planned conferences on Afghanistan in Istanbul and Bonn will define a genuine programme for nation-building for a strong, secure and peaceful Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and your team on your able guidance of the work of the Security Council for the month of September and for convening today's debate.

I would also like to pay my respects to and welcome to the Security Council His Excellency Mr. Zalmai Rassoul, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, who joins us here today. And I offer my appreciation of the briefing by Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and the important work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) under his able leadership.

However, before I proceed any further, I would like to speak about and offer a eulogy for that great personage Ustad Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was unfortunately martyred at a time when the world needed him most. For those of us here who were not aware of his contributions, his genius, his capabilities and his immense efforts, he was a person who brought together not only Afghans, but also the people and Government of Pakistan with the people and Government of Afghanistan. I am not terribly sure if there is anyone who can step into his shoes, and I would like to state that we stand by the people of Afghanistan not only in this hour of grief but at this tremendous moment of trial. He was martyred by the enemies of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Those forces can be defeated only by an even greater resolve for reconciliation and reintegration. A reconciled Afghanistan was his dream until the very last moment of his illustrious life. In fact, he ran back

post-haste from Tehran to Afghanistan to meet this awkward end. He was a person who had a dream and who knew that the long-term solution to security challenges was rooted in effective reconciliation and reintegration. I feel that it is important to bring certain aspects of this to the attention of this assembly of personages in the Security Council.

I will now read from portions of an article by Bashir Ahmad Gwakh of the *Asia Times*, contributed to by Frud Bezhan of Radio Free Afghanistan and its correspondent Zarghona Mangal. Mr. Rabbani was summoned to his home to receive a man bearing a "special message" from Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar. Let there be no doubt about that fact. An eyewitness from the National Directorate of Security (NDS) of Afghanistan who was witness to this gruesome act said that Rahmatullah Wahidyar, a member of the High Peace Council and Deputy Minister in the former Taliban regime, was the one who brought the bomber to meet with Rabbani and with top presidential adviser Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, who was also seriously injured in that day's attack.

Who is Rahmatullah Wahidyar? A document issued by the Security Council itself de-listed him, at a time when I sat here and said before the Council and Mr. De Mistura, "We are de-listing a lot of people. I hope we know what we are doing". Unfortunately, it seems that was not necessarily so. He was de-listed — *vide* a letter dated 18 July 2011 from the Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1988 (2011).

The other important aspect of this was that after this gruesome incident — and the revered President Karzai himself has said that it was Mr. Stanekzai who first alerted him that a messenger had arrived in Kabul, bearing an important message from the Taliban — initially, and very interestingly, the Taliban spokesman Mr. Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack in an interview with Reuters. But as world indignation built up, the same spokesman later wrote in a statement to Radio Free Afghanistan that the group did not know about the incident, which was very pat.

I will then go a step further. This is very interesting; it reminds me of the last part of the film *Casablanca*. Major Strasser has been shot dead: "Round up the usual suspects". Now, the next day, the Balkh provincial Governor, Mr. Atta Mohammad Noor, tells Radio Free Afghanistan, that it was Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence that was supporting them. I wonder where he got that from in Balkh. Anyway, this was considered very credible by some people, I am sorry to say. But then the NDS intelligence spokesman, Shafiqullah Taheri, said that it was possible that the Quetta Shura was involved. This was a new interdiction. The Quetta Shura is the leadership council of the Afghan Taliban that is believed to based in Pakistan, which I find very intriguing; how this all shifts into a mould with great ease.

Now it changes again. The same person says our investigations are continuing, despite such major accusations being made. As far as we know, it was a person named Hamidullah Akhund who came to talk to the Peace Council, claiming, and I stress this, to represent the Quetta Shura. That means — conclusion — that the Quetta Shura was involved in the attack.

I have no time for the Quetta Shura or anyone else who propagates violence. But I do wonder why it is in a way moved towards Pakistan in matters that normally become inamicable to my country. I now quote what I have said to the Council itself many times: "the opposition grouping headed by opposition leader Abdullah Abdullah has strongly opposed the idea of negotiating with the Taliban and has characterized the group as unworthy of participating in the Government".

Those are all matters raised by Radio Free Kabul and Mr. Gwakh in the *Asia Times*. I thought it pertinent to read them out before the Council.

Mr. Rabbani's untimely demise must not leave a void. We hope that the Security Council will respect his legacy. We respect the determination of the Afghan Government and its people for a viable and results-oriented reconciliation process. Only an Afghanistan at peace with itself can ensure the security of its own people, assets and visitors. Only when the Afghans are settled will my country, Pakistan, be settled and face less of a security threat than it does today.

The report of the Secretary-General under consideration (S/2011/590) has rightly underlined the need for constructive dialogue and reconciliation while avoiding the politics of mistrust, intimidation, fear or revenge. We agree with that observation. Reconciliation under the threat of coercion or retribution is inferior at best.

Pakistan is working for Afghanistan's security and stability on three distinct layers. First, we have maintained a robust presence of our forces along the international border. We would hope that this is being done on the other side as well. The total number of our troops in paramilitary deployment in the border regions far exceeds the number of international troops in all of Afghanistan.

Secondly, we provide and seek cross-border security and intelligence cooperation in concrete terms. That is done under the auspices of the Tripartite Commission, which also includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force. Since its inception in 2003 in Islamabad, the Tripartite Commission has met 35 times and remains a potent platform for seeking operational clarity and coordination on the ground.

Thirdly, in terms of multilateral cooperation, we are engaged in a number of important regional initiatives in Afghanistan, with other friendly countries like Iran, Tajikistan, Turkey, the Russian Federation, China, the United States and even Kyrgyzstan. Besides regional connectivity for economic cooperation, security is a common theme of these initiatives. Undertaken at the highest political level, the exchange is credible and meaningful.

In deference to such concrete and comprehensive interactions, we tend to avoid a blame game, even when militants cross over from the other side and attack our troops and innocent civilians. As stated by our Foreign Minister in the general debate at the General Assembly on Tuesday, we must work closely together and as responsible partners in a cooperative manner, and not rush to judgments or question each others' intentions (see A/66/PV.29).

The report of the Secretary-General has rightly pointed out that development, governance and the rule of law are crucial for irreversible transition processes, as envisaged in the Kabul Conference. The Secretary-General has stressed the need for capturing the current political and financial interest in transition to set the country on a sustainable course. He has also underlined the value of long-term international support and private sector investment in facilitating the transition. That has not, despite many words here, quite materialized, and has been the bane of the problem in Afghanistan. These are valid observations that merit serious attention from Afghanistan's international partners.

Pakistan is not oblivious to Afghanistan's developmental needs or the imperatives of a successful implementation of the Kabul process. We will continue our assistance programmes in Afghanistan, the largest that we have with any country at the moment, being the State that we are, despite our serious resource constraints. We have also offered assistance in capacity-building for Afghan security forces.

We are still hosts to millions of Afghan refugees, at very considerable cost to us. The present report on the situation in Afghanistan does not update us on the refugee situation. We hope it will do so in the next report. We hope that the international community will remain cognizant of Pakistan's problems.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Serrano.

Mr. Serrano: I wish to convey the thanks of the European Union (EU) for having been invited to participate in this debate.

The candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Iceland, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

I would like to thank Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his briefing, and the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2011/590). Our thanks also go out to His Excellency Foreign Minister Zalmai Rassoul for his important presentation.

At the outset, let me reiterate how much importance we attach to the United Nations efforts in Afghanistan, especially those of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The work of the United Nations will remain vital to Afghanistan's fate for years to come. That is why we all have to continue to support it, both politically and financially. The European Union itself is also in it for the long haul — hence our long-term partnership with Afghanistan that is currently under preparation.

In July, concrete transition began with the handover of security responsibility from the International Security Assistance Force to Afghan

forces in seven areas of the country. Elsewhere, preparations are under way for more such security transfers. We are encouraged by how well the Afghan Security Forces have assumed their new role despite the difficult context. That context should serve to strengthen the international community's resolve to contribute to the success of the transition by effectively training these forces.

During the previous Afghanistan debate in the Council (see S/PV.6574), we noted with concern that insecurity was on the rise, making transition harder. Those concerns have not abated. The level of civilian casualties, the vast majority caused by insurgents, remains unacceptably high. Civilians are no longer safe from anti-Government forces, even in hospitals and mosques. Recent months have also witnessed the violent deaths of several high-ranking Afghan officials and, just last week, of Mr. Rabbani, the Chair of the High Peace Council.

I wish to reiterate the European Union's firm condemnation of this heinous attack and convey our condolences. Mr. Rabbani's legacy can best be honoured by redoubling reconciliation efforts. We applaud the Government for committing precisely to such efforts.

Against this security background, it is all the more encouraging that the Kabul process is, in many respects, gaining momentum. The European Union would particularly like to commend efforts towards resolving the Kabul Bank crisis and progress towards resuming the International Monetary Fund programme. Successfully tackling the final outstanding issues ahead of the Bonn Conference is crucial to bolstering the confidence of donors, including the European Union and its member States, as they seek to do their part in the context of the Kabul process.

Among other hopeful signs, we have seen a number of national priority programmes move forward, including in the area of justice reform. We welcome what has been achieved in that particular area. After all, independent and professional justice institutions are indispensable. Afghanistan needs them for a better security climate, a better investment climate and a better human rights climate. Legislation will remain void without the institutions to implement it.

Afghanistan's commitments to international human rights conventions are a case in point. On human rights, let me say that the rights of women deserve special attention, during transition and beyond. That is exactly why we need female leaders around the table as we prepare for Bonn.

Small steps forward on some national priority programmes should not be allowed to give rise to complacency. The transition process will be viable only if all national priority programmes move forward together. In the area of governance, such positive steps as the launch of the anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee need to be backed up with structural measures that will bring down corruption and bring about more transparency and accountability with regard to public finances.

There can be no accountability without parliamentary control. That is why we urge the Afghan Parliament to fully resume its functions. This means getting important legislative work done and providing the necessary checks and balances when it comes to State-building in Afghanistan. New legislation should thus be submitted for parliamentary approval. There is room for improvement here, and it is in this context that the European Union stands ready to support Afghan commitments to long-term electoral reform.

Of course we need to look beyond Kabul to the provinces and districts and sub-national governance. We need to strengthen the capacity and accountability of provincial and municipal institutions. Only then will the right services be delivered to the right people in the right way. Also, to get their fair share of aid, provinces and districts should have a better connection to the centre. After all, in a post-transition Afghanistan, funds will increasingly be channelled through the central Government.

Now that I have spoken about Kabul and the local level, I want to briefly address the regional context. The neighbouring countries have a strong stake in and a special responsibility for a stable and secure Afghanistan. Building on our ongoing programmes, the European Union stands ready to throw its weight behind initiatives that promote regional integration and cooperation. We look forward to the upcoming Istanbul Conference, which represents an opportunity to give new impetus to the regional agenda ahead of the Bonn Conference. The New Silk Road initiative, launched just last week, offers a vision for promising economic cooperation from which Afghanistan and its neighbours could benefit greatly.

The Afghan people — most of whom are poor and many of whom are currently threatened by drought — need to see concrete improvements in their lives and livelihoods. We all need to play our part in that. As the late Mr. Rabbani said at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations:

> "The combination of extreme poverty with extreme inequality within and between countries is an affront to our common humanity, a tragic situation which requires urgent global solidarity." (*A/55/PV.7, p.11*)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Staffan de Mistura to respond to the comments that have been made.

Mr. De Mistura: If Minister Rassoul will allow me, I will say that both Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) feel highly hopeful, from what I have been hearing in this meeting. This body is providing support for the future of Afghanistan — in spite of the tragic events that have occurred — and for the work of UNAMA, as well as for continuing cooperation between the Mission and the country. That support is going to help both of us when we return to Kabul, as I will tomorrow. That would be my only comment.

I would like to say a word about Lebanon, for which I have great affection as I myself was posted there. As have many other speakers, I wish to say how pleased I am to see Lebanon holding the presidency of this body.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Thank you, Mr. President. I wish you every success and may God bless you and grant you health and serenity.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. De Mistura for his kind words towards Lebanon.

The representative of Afghanistan has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Rassoul (Afghanistan): I wish to thank all members of the Council for their expressions of sympathy and condolence on the martyrdom of Mr. Rabbani. I would like also to report that a serious investigation is being conducted to find out how the assassination happened. Of course, when we have the final results, we will notify the Council.

(*spoke in French*)

Allow me, on behalf of my people and Government, to thank the members of the Council and the representatives of the countries that are friends of Afghanistan for their lasting support and commitment to my country. With their support, Afghanistan will play an essential role in the peace, stability and prosperity of the region, and will contribute to global peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.